

Vallejo is grateful for...

Mary Ann Buggs



Place of birth: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I'm an enrolled member of the Caddo tribe and also of Cheyenne-Arapaho descent.

Year arrived in Vallejo: 2008

Occupation: Administrative director, Faith Food Fridays

Language: English and a little Spanish

What is your special talent? I love to write. I've had a couple of writing jobs over the years and have always enjoyed finding out about other people's life experiences.

Special memory of Vallejo? A Mayor's Prayer Breakfast used to be held every year, and lots of people from different organizations and walks of

life would come together in unity for Vallejo. I think we need to get back to events like that.

What do you appreciate about your Vallejo neighborhood? On NextDoor it's called "South Rollingwood," near Benicia Road. I've lived in four different neighborhoods in Vallejo and this is the best. It's usually very quiet. We have a smallish, comfortable yard with friendly neighbors.

What is a favorite place to hang out in Vallejo? The waterfront. I grew up around water in the Pacific Northwest, and boating and fishing are in my blood. It's peaceful down there and I have so many memories of lunches with friends and family. The Vallejo Pow Wow is always down there and of course, all the fun cultural events like the Pirate Festival.

What is your favorite Vallejo community event? The annual 4th of July festivities hold fond memories for me. We like to watch the fireworks at the waterfront and more recently Faith Food Fridays has been in the parade. I'm very patriotic and love an excuse to celebrate this country!

What do you hope for yourself in the next 10 years? I hope to expand Faith Food Fridays in the areas of jobs, training, homelessness support or mental health services. We're also hoping to build a basketball court on site.

What do you hope for Vallejo? I'm looking forward to more racial justice leading to eventual racial equity through open dialogue and opportunities to engage honestly and fairly with each other.

What have you done during the pandemic to help others? I helped keep Faith Food Fridays open as we moved our services totally outdoors with strict COVID safety guidelines. We also added a Sunday drive-through distribution and started our program at another location on Thursdays. We managed to hold our traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas events with 75% fewer volunteers.

What is one pandemic silver lining? I was challenged to completely change the way I work and ended up realizing that my true destiny is to help end poverty and hunger in this country through racial equity work. It was like a floodgate opened and I got opportunities to work on really cool projects to help people in Vallejo.

What person in Vallejo do you really appreciate? Every single day I'm more amazed at how my husband Benjamin's vision brings things to life at Faith Food Fridays right in front of my eyes. He's tough and disciplined but has a huge heart for anybody in need. Never once have I seen him shrink from standing up for what's right or fair, even when those around him insist on the exact opposite. Lastly, he encourages (pushes) me to always be better.